



# MEMO



N O R T H C A R O L I N A D I V I S I O N O F  
E M E R G E N C Y M A N A G E M E N T

## State Prepares for Active Hurricane Season

Over the past few years, North Carolina has had relatively quiet hurricane seasons. The most serious impacts were from Tropical Storms Ernesto and Alberto in 2006 and Hanna in 2008. But even those storms only caused minor water and wind damage and some localized flooding.

“North Carolina has been very fortunate in recent years with relatively little damage from hurricanes,” said Gov. Bev Perdue. “But we can not let our guard down and become complacent. Recent tornadoes across our state and the Southeast and massive flooding in Tennessee are reminders just how essential it is to be disaster-ready at all times.”



Gov. Perdue (center) is joined (from left) by National Weather Service meteorologist Darin Figurskey, Gen. William Ingram, Sec. Reuben Young, Doug Hoell and Highway Patrol Col. Randy Glover to outline the state's preparations for hurricane season.

Gov. Bev Perdue proclaimed May 23-29 Hurricane Preparedness Week and urged all residents to update their family emergency plans and supplies kits.

According to the National Weather Service, hurricanes strike North Carolina an average of every three years. This year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is predicting 14 to 23 named storms, eight to 14 hurricanes, including three to seven major hurricanes. Scientists at North Carolina State University also predict above normal activity forecasting 15 to 18 named storms, including eight to 11 hurricanes and an 80 percent chance of a hurricane making landfall.

Secretary Reuben Young of the N.C. Department of Crime Control and Public Safety said it is “vital that people prepare themselves and their families for emergencies so they can be safe on their own for the first several days after a storm. That way, law enforcement, firefighters and emergency medical service crews can direct resources and response efforts to life-threatening situations first.”

County and state agencies have been working together to ensure that plans are updated and all parties know their roles and responsibilities before, during and after storms strike. In early May, more than 40 state, federal and non-profit agencies joined 68 county governments for a two-day hurricane exercise to prepare for and respond to a simulated Category 4 hurricane in North Carolina (see article). State and local officials also met to discuss evacuation plans for the Outer Banks and held joint symposium with East Carolina University for emergency management personnel, ECU faculty, meteorologists and emergency technology specialists to discuss natural hazards.

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“Working with our government, corporate and non-profit partners before disaster strikes improves our response when a hurricane hits the state,” said N.C. Emergency Management Director Doug Hoell.

Area coordinators have been conducting information sessions with public officials and local emergency planning committees to better familiarize local leaders with response capabilities and procedures.

“It all starts at the local level,” said Alan Byrd, NCEM area coordinator for central North Carolina. “The more knowledgeable and prepared they are in the community, the better off their citizens will be.”

## NCEM Involving Communities in Disaster Response

The state emergency management division has been expanding programs to encourage more community involvement in disaster response and recovery efforts. The goal: to urge citizens to work together during disasters and become increasingly self-reliant during emergencies so that limited response resources can be directed to the most critical needs. The CERT and Adopt-a-POD programs have been garnering more local support in recent months.

During the past year, the division’s Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program has been rejuvenated under the direction of Patty Moore. CERT educates and trains citizens in basic disaster response techniques so that volunteers can take a more active role in the safety of their neighborhoods, workplace or schools during a crisis since local citizens are often the first ones at the disaster scene.



*CERT participants practice lessons learned during a training class in Shelby in April.*

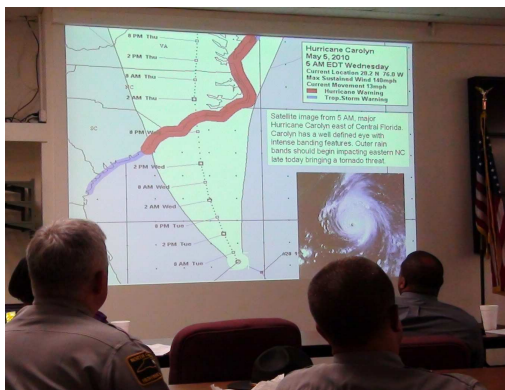
“CERT members can provide immediate assistance to victims and organize additional volunteers at the scene,” said Moore. “These teams are a tremendous asset for their communities – especially during times of crises.”

Moore has organized CERT classes across the state and is expanding the program into local high schools to encourage the formation of Teen CERT teams.

The division also is working with local groups to develop Adopt-a-POD programs. The idea is to recruit volunteers to staff points of distribution (POD) sites in their community to distribute life-sustaining emergency commodities to the public following a disaster or emergency. This spring, the North Carolina Baptist Men trained how to be support staff for a POD so they could distribute food, water, blankets, ice, tarps or other such supplies that are needed immediately following a disaster.

Working through the local emergency management director, the POD sites can be used until the community infrastructure and local commerce are back in operation. Trained volunteers establish a working agreement and meet criteria outlined by the local emergency management director. The CERT and Adopt-a-POD programs are just two examples of how local citizens can get involved in their community through disaster recovery operations.

## Hurricane Exercise Prepares Agencies



*Exercise participants look at a projected hurricane path during the hurricane exercise conducted May 4 and 5.*

Last month, more than 40 state and federal agencies and non-profit organizations and 68 counties participated in a statewide hurricane exercise to test communication and response capabilities. The two-day exercise provided more than 200 participants an opportunity to interact and rehearse their duties to prepare the populous for a Category 4 hurricane making landfall in North Carolina. Exercise participants had to respond to storm surge levels of eight to nine feet along the Outer Banks, and between 11 and 16 feet along the Crystal Coast and weather forecasts for up to eight inches of rainfall on top of already saturated rivers.

While most of the participants worked in the State Emergency Operations Center, two other state agencies conducted simultaneous exercises based on the same scenario.

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### *Hurricane Exercise continued*

The N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services used the exercise as an opportunity to activate their emergency operations center and test communication systems such as VIPER, email, telephone and fax lines. The exercise allowed staff to refresh themselves on hurricane response plans and procedures.

“The exercise gave us the chance to stand up our EOC and integrate with other divisions during a hurricane response,” said Mark Howell, emergency preparedness specialist with N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Meanwhile, the N.C. Division of Public Health rehearsed their plans for activating their strategic national stockpile plan. The agency looked at the communication and supply line transfer of resources from private sector hospitals to county health department, local county emergency management offices, state emergency management office and the state public health office.



*Director Hoell receives updates from planning staff during the hurricane exercise.*

“All of our state partners were actively engaged in the exercise, rehearsing their response just as they would during an actual hurricane,” said Doug Hoell, NCEM director. “This was an excellent learning environment to prepare us for the 2010 hurricane season.”

## **NC and VA Discuss Evacuation Plans**

Nearly 100 emergency management and law enforcement officials from North Carolina and Virginia met in Currituck County last month to discuss evacuation plans for North Carolina’s Outer Banks and Virginia’s Tidewater regions. The group discussed potential impacts, physical, logistical and communications challenges each state could face if a Category 2 or stronger hurricane were to make landfall along the coast.

“We know that evacuating the Outer Banks is going to be one of our biggest challenges in preparing for a hurricane strike in North Carolina,” said Mike Sprayberry, NCEM Deputy Director. “It’s been nearly seven years since a significant storm impacted that area, so there are potentially thousands of residents and tourists who are unfamiliar with what these storms can do.”



*Participants discussed necessary steps for evacuating North Carolina’s Outer Banks and Virginia’s Tidewater areas at a recent meeting.*

The group also discussed regional traffic control, public information, law enforcement and shelter procedures between the two states. For more information, contact the NCEM Eastern Branch Office at 252-520-4923.

## **National UASI Conference in New Orleans**

Officials from NCEM will represent North Carolina at the National Urban Area Security Initiative Conference June 21 - 24 in New Orleans. Representatives from N. C. Crime Control and Public Safety Department and NCEM will join other UASI program participants, State’s Administrative Agency representative such as North Carolina’s CCPS Secretary Reuben Young, U.S. Department of Homeland Security offices and private sector partners from across the country to exchange information on technical and managerial aspects of the UASI program. Conference activities include workshops on federal Homeland Security Grant Programs and panel discussions on planning, training/exercises, interoperable communications and others.

The conference brings together agencies and personnel involved in daily UASI programs. The conference will highlight best practices from 62 urban areas across the country and the 54 states, territories and districts.

## Simulated Train Wreck Offers Valuable Training for Hazmat Teams

Hazardous materials Regional Response Teams tested their skills in April as they respond to a simulated crash between a gasoline truck and a freight train. As part of the scenario, first responders and emergency management crews were required to shut down a running locomotive, extract and treat the injured train crew, extinguish a fire, patch a leaking gasoline truck and monitor air quality to determine if nearby residents and businesses needed to be evacuated.

“This exercise provided a rare and invaluable opportunity for multiple teams to train together in a potentially explosive situation,” said Chris Rose, state coordinator for the RRT program. “Most



people don't realize that hazardous materials are transported across our highways each and every day and our crews can be called on at any moment to respond to a deadly situation. This training helps ensure they are ready for anything.”



*Crews practice rescuing a train crew member (left) and decontaminating the victim (above) during a recent multi-tiered hazmat training exercise in Asheville.*

Hazmat crews from Asheville, Fayetteville, Charlotte and Greensboro divided the tasks among the four teams. Employees from fire departments in Asheville, Greensboro and Raleigh, N.C. Emergency Management, CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern Railroad and a local community college also participated in the exercise.

The exercises was coordinated by Asheville Fire Department and sponsored by TRANSCAER, a voluntary national outreach effort that helps communities near major transportation routes prepare for and respond to possible hazardous materials incidents. Training was paid for with federal funds from NCEM.

## Partnering in Preparedness

In April, NCEM Director Doug Hoell spoke to more than 100 leaders of volunteer organizations, business representatives and government officials at the Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness in Winston-Salem to encourage them to get more involved in community-based disaster response. The meeting was the second in a series designed to seek ways to foster greater teamwork during times of crisis. The original summit, held last fall, was sponsored by N.C. Division of Public Health and the U.S. Center for Disease Control.

“The fact is, we are all members of the community and we all have a share in the responsibility for preparedness and response,” said Hoell.

The division is preparing to meet with the Retail Merchants Association to develop plans for assisting business owners in strengthening their continuity of operation plans following a disaster.

“The sooner grocery stores, gas stations, pharmacies, hardware stores and other key businesses are back in operation, the better it is for all of us,” Hoell added.

The overall goal for the summit is to promote preparedness in every sector of the community and to attempt to connect response capabilities among the private, volunteer and public sectors.

“We all have a stake in disaster response and we all have a part to play in recovery,” Hoell concluded.



*Hoell speaks to the audience.*

## New Hanover County EOC Representatives Go to Jail

*By Wayne Pearce, New Hanover County Emergency Management Deputy Director*

Representatives from the New Hanover County Emergency Operations Center were sent to jail for the 2010 hurricane exercise. Thankfully, this was a planned trip.

In New Hanover County's continuity of operations plan, there are several locations identified as alternate EOC locations. The County Health Department's training auditorium is one option. The Wilmington Fire Department's main training room and Wilmington Police Department's training auditorium are other viable sites. But the emergency officials chose the Annex E building at the New Hanover County Jail to exercise their continuity plan and decided to put that plan into action for the statewide hurricane exercise May 4 through 5.



*New Hanover County staff work in the alternative EOC at the county jail.*

"The jail annex was selected because it is county-owned, the county's telecommunications network is underground fiber optic cables and it has the backup voice over internet protocol telephone system," said Wayne Pearce, New Hanover County Emergency Management deputy director. "The gracious hospitality of Sheriff McMahon and his staff was an added plus."

In order to make the jail a suitable location, several changes were made.

Since the telephone system was converted to VOIP several years ago, the New Hanover Information Technology Department was able to relocate 24 of the main EOC phones in addition to installing internet connections at work stations in the male inmate section of the annex. The VoIP technology allowed the alternative site to use the same phone numbers as the main EOC.

The female inmate section was converted into the Emergency Public Information Center with the roll-down phone lines.

"We published one number for information. This number will roll to the next available phone within EPIC ensuring someone will answer a call from the public," Pearce explains.

The inmate-in-processing area was converted into the control group work/meeting room.

There were problems identified during the exercise, such as printer incompatibility and fax machines that didn't work on the VoIP phone lines.

"Rest rooms were another obstacle. Since it was a jail, restrooms had no doors," says Pearce.

In the exercise hot wash, it was determined that supplies would need to be stored at the jail if it was to be used as an alternate EOC. New Hanover County Sheriff Department is making arrangements to store items.

"Even without the amenities of the regular EOC, the jail annex proved it could be a successful backup for the county," Pearce concludes.

## Agencies Conduct Nuclear Power Plant Exercise

N.C. Emergency Management will join officials from Progress Energy, as well as other local, state and federal agencies to participate in a one-day exercise for the Brunswick Nuclear Power Plant. The biennial exercise will test emergency plans and procedures for all agencies that would respond to a nuclear incident at the plant. Federal regulators will observe and evaluate the coordinated response effort.



## Yancey County Tests Emergency Response Skills

A week-long exercise this spring tested every component of Yancey County's emergency management system.

First responders, emergency management and law enforcement crews worked together to respond to numerous situations during the multi-faceted training event. The teams practiced negotiation skills in a hostage situation. They also rescued victims pinned into a wrecked vehicle and extinguished a large-scale industrial fire.

More than 90 people honed their emergency response skills during the largest coordinated exercise of its kind ever held in the county. Participating agencies included the Yancey County Sheriff's Office, all eight Yancey County fire departments, EMS and rescue squad and Burnsville Police department. Fire fighters from Mitchell County and several other adjoining counties joined in the training, as well. And Mitchell County Emergency Management, State Highway Patrol, NCDOT, Verizon and Charter Communications also participated in the exercise.

The training was held April 19-24 at the TRC building off Highway 19. Yancey County Emergency Management planned and coordinated the exercise which was funded through a \$48,000 grant from the N.C. Division of Emergency Management.

"The Yancey County exercise tested those working partnerships between the state and local jurisdictions for responding to various types of emergencies," said Tiawana Ramsey, NCEM area coordinator. "You can have the best plans in place, but it is not until you have an opportunity to exercise those plans, that you truly find out where your strengths and weaknesses lie."



*Exercise participants tackle an industrial fire during the exercise.*

## Sports Event Risk Management Workshop

The Charlotte Fire Department and Emergency Management division will host a Sport Event Risk Management Workshop at the Charlotte Fire Academy June 15 through 16.

The workshop will provide information to current and future sports security managers that oversee professional, college and large citizen gathering venues. Workshop participants will learn the latest risk assessment methods, new ways to identify vulnerabilities and threats, how to improve physical protections systems and strengthen emergency response and recovery operations.

The National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security at the University of Southern Mississippi will present the information.



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### ***"In the Business of Saving Lives and Protecting Property"***

*The North Carolina Division of Emergency Management was formed in 1977 to coordinate the preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation activities of all agencies for emergency management within North Carolina. It performs this mission by planning, organizing, staffing, equipping, training, testing and activating emergency management programs during times of need.*